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NEWSLETTER 2020/3 NOVEMBER

IN FOCUS

Mapping Economic Anthropology

Help us put Economic Anthropology across Europe on the map! We would like to collect and publish online resources on related organizations, associations, and institutions of economic anthropology on our website. The aim is to map out the subdiscipline and provide a basis for outreach among our members, as well as economic anthropologists and the wider academic audience and broader public. Please pass on information about any organizations, associations, and institutions related to economic anthropology where you live, work, and/or do research to Charlotte: charlotte.bruckermann@uib.no.

Engaging unemployment: a research project in Italy

The recent Covid-19 crisis with its deep economic impact urges the anthropological community to new research about employment and job-loss. In particular, unemployment is the dark side of the current, capitalist job market and the true diacritic of the global economy. Nonetheless, if unemployment is often present in the public debate, less attention is paid to unemployed people. More than that, the hegemonic discourse tends to consider them as simple variables of the market logic or to blame them for their own situation. Anthropology could give great help to dispel these false representations, by listening to the voices and the stories of the unemployed.

This is one of the main reasons that led me to conduct, between 2014 and 2016, fieldwork research among adult unemployed people in Turin – once the capital of Italian factory economy – searching for the social meaning of joblessness. Liminality appears, in line with Katherine Newman's insight, as the aptest conceptual metaphor to describe both the condition of the unemployed and that of the late-industrial city, now blocked in an uneasy transition. Above all, against any simplistic and individualistic view of the phenomenon, my interlocutors' stories remind us that unemployment is a true "social drama", in Victor Turner's terms, illustrating all the contradictions of the neo-liberal economy.

Coming to the present days, as Carrie Lane and Jong Bum Kwon have recently shown, anthropology is fully equipped to investigate and understand unemployment. Thus, as anthropologists, we can offer our contribution to further the critical analysis on this social and cultural phenomenon and its recent developments in this pandemic age.

Carlo Capello

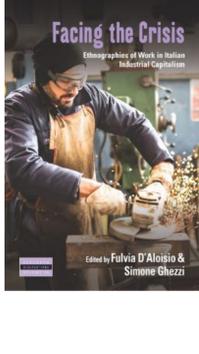
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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

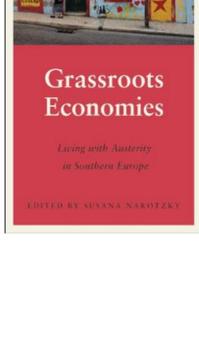
BOOKS, EDITED VOLUMES, AND SPECIAL ISSUES



D'Aloisio F., Ghezzi S. (eds.) (2020). *Ethnographies of Work in Italian Industrial Capitalism*. New York - Oxford: Berghahn

<https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/DAlaisioFacing>

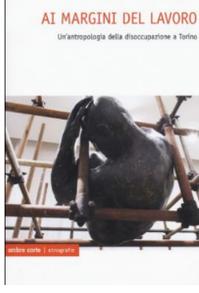
The 2007/2008 global crisis fully confirmed what was already apparent in Italian capitalism: the frailty of its industrial system. The small and medium firms that had been recognized as the backbone of the Italian economy have now become the fragile pillar of it, as explained in the book. The industrial district model is having a hard time in doing those things it could do best: technological innovation, skilled labour, high productivity. This book tackles some of these issues analyzing some cases of industrial districts in Central and Northern Italy and one large industrial site in the South by means of ethnographic methodology. The intimate knowledge, that the ethnographers who contributed to the volume have acquired, has allowed them to bring out a composite situation. Alongside a fatalistic acceptance of the economic situation, new elements are emerging, new forms of resistance, new strategies to face the crisis, new ways of reorganizing one's life through work. The final chapter of the volume is a contribution by the economist Fumagalli, offering his critical view on the troubling precarization of work, whereas Don Kalb's Afterword puts the anthropological particulars of the ethnographic analyses in a global capitalist trajectory.



Narotzky S. (ed.) (2020). *Grassroots Economies. Living with Austerity in Southern Europe*. London: Pluto Press.

<https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745340234/grassroots-economies/>

The austerity crisis has radically altered the economic landscape of Southern Europe. But alongside the decimation of public services and infrastructure lies the wreckage of a generation's visions for the future. In Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, there is a new, difficult reality of downward mobility. *Grassroots Economies* interrogates the effects of the economic crisis on the livelihood of working people, providing insight into their anxieties. Drawing on rich ethnographic material, it is a distinctive comparative analysis that explores the contradictions of their coping mechanisms and support structures. With a focus on gender, the book explores values and ideologies, including dispossession and accumulation. Ultimately it demonstrates that everyday interactions on the local scale provide a significant sense of the global.



Capello C. (2020). *Ai margini del lavoro. Un'antropologia della disoccupazione a Torino*. Verona: Ombre corte

<https://www.libreriauniversitaria.it/margini-lavoro-antropologia-disoccupazione-torino/libro/9788869481482>

<https://www.libreriauniversitaria.it/margini-lavoro-antropologia-disoccupazione-torino/libro/9788869481482>



Lubbers M.J., Valenzuela-Garcia H., Small M.L. (eds.) 2020. Special issue *Do Networks Help People to Manage Poverty? Perspectives from the Field*. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 689.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/ann/689/1>



Valenzuela-Garcia H., Lubbers M. J., Molina J. L. (2020). *Vivo entre cuatro paredes. La vulnerabilidad relacional en contextos de exclusión social*. Madrid: FOESSA.

<https://www.caritas.es/producto/vivo-entre-cuatro-paredes/>

ARTICLES

Fontefrancesco M.F., Zocchi D.M. (2020). "Indigenous crops and cultural dynamics in the markets of Nakuru County, Kenya". *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, 22: 100269. DOI: [10.1016/j.ijgfs.2020.100269](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2020.100269)

Kojanic, O. 2020. "We're All Here for the Money": Solidarity and Divisions in a Worker-Owned Company." *Dialectical Anthropology*, Online first. DOI: [10.1007/s10624-020-09616-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-020-09616-z)

Vetta, T., Palomera, J. (2020). "Concrete Stories in Southern Europe: Financialisation and Inequality in the Construction Chain". *Antipode*, 52: 888-907. DOI: [10.1111/anti.12620](https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12620)

Zocchi D.M., Piochi M., Cabrino G., Fontefrancesco M.F., Torri L. (2020). "Linking producers' and consumers' perceptions in the valuation of non timber forest products: An analysis of Ogiek forest honey". *Food Research International*, 137: 109417. DOI: [10.1016/j.foodres.2020.109417](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2020.109417)

PERSPECTIVES, NOTES AND QUERIES

The Uses of Entrepreneurship in Anthropology

'Entrepreneur' and 'entrepreneurship' have been useful ideas for framing opportunity-seeking behaviour in diverse localities. This is especially because anthropologists have pushed the uses of these terms in new directions, beyond the actions of people like self-made billionaires in Silicon Valley. By ways of diversifying what the entrepreneur could signify, we have learned the ropes of the daily business of women entrepreneurs, homeless entrepreneurs and migrant entrepreneurs. This work highlights patterns of economic survival and mundane strategizing. It challenges elitist views on creativity, by posing that smart solutions and radical innovations often emerge out of disaster and personal struggle. Anthropology has thus democratised or multiplied what entrepreneurship could entail.

Yet, ethnographic depictions of entrepreneurs also take a terminology and ideas that were formulated in continental philosophy and economic theory, most notably that of Joseph Schumpeter, and apply them in new ways.

Anthropology's expansion of the attribute 'entrepreneurial' is emancipatory in a sense, because it rejects denigrating markers such as 'hidden', 'informal' or 'invisible' to describe the economic activities of marginalised people. However, when we call people entrepreneurs, we run the risk of weaving neoliberal logics into our well-intentioned descriptions of those activities.

I think this matter is worth raising especially in light of the rising popularity of entrepreneurship as a new means of big D - Development. It has become unfashionable to base development on aid and government spending. Instead, many programmes and initiatives have begun to hold that people who live in poverty have an entrepreneurial potential that should be encouraged so that they can improve themselves by their own means. What we have, broadly, is an awkward encounter between our emancipatory intent to depict people as entrepreneurial achievers, and Development's intent to instil market-oriented behaviour.

'Entrepreneur' is not anymore, if it has ever been, an innocent term. In fact, it has become an important element in individualising economic success and failure. Those who do not live up to the fantasies of inner potential, pro-activism and continuous improvement that the idea of entrepreneurship entails risk being blamed for lacking motivation and drive. They should stop 'talking about problems', but instead should find gaps in the market and creative solutions.

Being an entrepreneur thus is becoming a directive rather than one of a number of ways of being and acting, and that directive makes it less likely that people will reflect on and seek to change the systems that co-produce their perilous economic position. We need an anthropology of entrepreneurship to highlight the individual, agentic, strategic elements in economic action.

However, that anthropology must be sensitive to how our own fetishes and neoliberal ghosts speak back to us from our descriptions of these actions.

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If you want to reply to this column, or if you want to write a column or have an idea for one, please communicate with James G. Carrier:

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Network: <https://www.easaonline.org/networks/economy/>

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